



The Tale of Aviary and Aileen



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Chapter 1 by Jenny Neill

Long ago, in the kingdom of Naprases, Land of Gold and Riches, there lived a young nobleman with impossibly curly golden hair, a beard to match, and sparkling golden eyes. He loved his kingdom fiercely, with a fire that could not be extinguished. He loved it so much that he swore at a young age that he would do anything to protect the land, to whatever end. He swore to himself, to Lang the Sun God, to everybody, that he would make this kingdom a formidable one, with magic and legends made flesh. He would make this kingdom one for the ages.

The young nobleman was good friends with the elderly King of Naprases, King Ermolai. Being unmarried and having no children, King Ermolai promised the nobleman that, as long as he didn't get himself into trouble, he would be king when the time came.

The noble accepted the weight on his shoulders. For his kingdom.

However, one day in the town square, the nobleman met a mysterious woman. She was a peasant; a bastard-born girl playing the piccolo for tips with a gray fox flouncing happily at her feet, almost dancing. Even the noble had to admit, they made quite the charming pair. It was in that moment the woman's light brown hair blowing in the autumn breeze her tanned skin

complementing the falling leaves around her, her cerulean blue eyes dancing with the melody of the piccolo, that the nobleman

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The noble knew that King Ermolai was the last thing on the nobleman's mind when he took her home. However, Ermolai was the last thing on the nobleman's mind when he took her home.

This, living with the nobleman, went on for about a week before the maiden fell ill. She began feeling blistering heat push up from under her skin, and soon her skin began to crack. Not like a sunburn. No, her skin cracked as if it was made of clay, and in the places where it fell off entirely, new clay-like material was waiting there, ready to harden an crack. Her eyes paled more and more each hour. It was grotesque, but the nobleman never loved her any less.

The noble could not call healers because then his love's presence in the castle would be known and Ermolai would never let him be king.

One day, the nobleman was awoken by a loud, repetitive squishing, popping, cracking noise that echoed the halls. It made the noble's heart rise up into his throat. His hands shaking, he lit a candle and patrolled his rooms, scanning for the source of the noise. He froze when he saw the music room.

Blood splattered the walls, the violins along the walls, all around, even on the pianoforte in the far corner of the room. There, in the middle of the room, was the noble's lover, splattered in blood as well. She was sitting with her back to him, leaning over something. The squish-crackle-pop noise ensued.

Oh, holy gods.

The young nobleman grabbed a blood-soaked violin off of the wall and struck his lover, and a CLANG filled the air as she fell forward on top of the corpse of her precious gray fox.

After that, the nobleman took his love and kept her in a cottage on the very edge of Naprases where she would be safe. He rarely visited, and as far as he knew, she never ate anyone ever again.

However, that is just the beginning.

In a cottage on the outskirts of a prosperous kingdom known as Naprases there was a young woman no older than 25. She could not get a full night's sleep ever since she mutilated her best friend, a gray fox she called Amica. She had been with a noble who she loved with a wildfire's passion, and she loved them as much, too. Their

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names were Aileen and Aviary.

Aileen was the spitting image of her mother, other than the fact that her hair was in thick, regal curls while her mother's hair was stick-straight. Aviary was the same, except her hair was straight as well. And, obviously, the only one with clay-skin was the mother. The twins had flawlessly healthy skin.

Aileen was, unfortunately, the favored of the two by their parents. The father favored her because she had his curls (although his were much smaller), which meant she had more royal blood than Aviary. The mother never admitted it, but she loved Aileen's effervescent aura. She wouldn't dare make Aviary feel left out, though. But sometimes it couldn't be helped.

This never affected Aileen and Aviary's relationship, though. They were the best of friends, despite their antithesis personalities. They were like fire and ice, light and dark; one couldn't possibly exist without the other.

One day in the late spring, Aileen and Aviary were getting ready for an indoor festival in the castle ballroom, celebrating Aria, Goddess of Music. Everyone who wished was to perform in the hall for the kingdom, and Aileen and Aviary were elated. They wore their finest gowns and the matching scarves that they never took off; the scarves that matched their eyes.

When they arrived at the castle, Aileen in gold and Aviary in light blue, they squeezed each other's hands tightly.

"Are you nervous?" Aviary asked her sister.

Aileen shook her head. "I have no room in my heart for negative feelings, and neither should you." She smiled her dazzling teeth and lifted Aviary's chin.

"Chin up, deep breaths," her voice cracked and Aviary touched her face.

She smiled at her curly-haired twin. They'd do it together.

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didn't know how she did it.

The song wasn't very long, but it felt like eons of harsh winds, cold brutality, raw emotion tugging at her. It was pain and joy and anger as one. When the song closed, the ballroom fell silent.

One clap. Another. Popcorn clapping until the room erupted in applause. Aileen bowed and traipsed off the stage with the grace of a lioness.

"I'm going to head down to the resting area. Good luck!"

"Thank you," Aviary responded to her curly-haired twin.

She rubbed her hands together and breathed in for four counts, then out for four counts. Then eight. Twelve. Finally she raised her head and walked up onto the stage, trying to mirror the unfathomable grace of her twin.

She bowed to the accompanist, a signal of dismissal. The accompanist left wordlessly, and Aviary sat down on the obsidian-colored bench. She wriggled her fingers.

She loosened her scarf a little bit, and then rested her hands on the keys.

The crash of her hands hitting the lower keys was like thunder striking the ballroom. Before the audience had time to comprehend it, her fingers moved up, bouncing along the keys like a rapid fire of bullets. Her fingers danced from key to key, like a hummingbird's breakneck wings.

All those days and nights at the pianoforte... it was all worth it. All those days she spent playing until her fingers bled, accidentally falling asleep on the lid or the bench. It was all worth it, as she knew it would be.

This chance to make people's eyes sparkle the way her's and her mother's do whenever they play... it's a chance that Aviary was glad to have.

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They all stood up and clapped. The room resounded in their joyous claps and whoops and hollers. Aviary damn near cried. She choked an awkward laugh and walked downstairs, her thunderous applause following her down the stairs to the resting area.

Her mother was downstairs with Aileen.

Rage pushed at Aviary's eyes and choked her throat. "YO-u were down here the whole...time...?" Her confidence leaked out of her like honey dripping out of a strainer.

The mother patted Aileen's curls. "I had to congratulate Aileen, you know."

Most of the time, their mother was unbiased, but sometimes, her true opinions peeked through.

"Everyone was saying what a GREAT job you did, Aileen."

Aileen cocked her brow at her.

"Okay, I had to work late, I'm sorry. Don't tell your father. How else does he think I'm supposed to pay for us? Damn nobles think money grows on trees."

Aviary waited for her praise, and when it didn't come something small fractured inside that 5-year-old's heart. She rarely cried. This day had been a rarity unlike any other. So she went into the corner, tucked her face into her scarf and her knees, and loosened the bonds that were so tightly holding her fractured pieces together.

When they got home, their mother brought in some food that she bought while the twin girls sat side-by-side on the porch steps, nibbling on the peppermint candy bushes that lined the windowsills.

They sat there for a few minutes before Aileen whispered in her sister's ear, "How do you think the chocolate tree's doing?"

Some time ago, Aileen and Aviary noticed a wild chocolate tree growing in their backyard. They took care of it, hoping it would be a surprise for their mother. Their mother did not know that it was still there, because she didn't approve of the chocolate tree (like any mother would). Now it stood a little taller than the

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Their thoughts were interrupted by a large man with impossibly curly hair, a beard to match, and sparkling golden eyes.

"Father!" the twins screamed in unison. Their father picked up Aileen and kissed her (because he wouldn't pick up Aviary) before looking at the two girls with those magic eyes of his.

"Do you girls want to visit the Knots?"

They gasped and said yes.

You see, the Knots was a place around the edge of the woods that the twins live. It's appears to be simply a large, stone, purple hand reaching out from the side of the cliff, as if trying to reach the ocean. Then, out of that hand, sprouted a yellow hand and a purple hand, and the hands would pitter-patter back and forth like this until they reached a small island with a colossal tree with pale pink flowers all over it.

Aileen and Aviary skipped over to the Knots playfully. They didn't know where this landmark came from, and frankly, they didn't particularly care.

"Hey, Aileen," one twin said, grabbing her twin sister. "Let's have a race. Try to reach the island while only touching the purple hands."

Aileen's eyes lit up. "Yeah! Ready... set... go!"

And they were off.

First Aviary was ahead, then Aileen, then Aviary, then Aileen, when suddenly, Aviary slipped off a hand and cried out to her sister, to her father.

Aileen was too far away now to see her twin as she fell into the ocean. However, the father ran up and looked at her.

"E Father help me!" she said as the tides dragged her around

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"Hang on!" he said as he dove down and until he saw a shark. He swam up to the shark and

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"By order of the King, by the Light of the Great Lang, I command you to attack that girl," the father said to the shark. The shark, being forced to, said 'yes sir' before swimming towards Aviary.

He climbed up onto the hand and watched as Aviary screamed.

"FATHER!" she stammered with fear. "FATHER, SOMETHING'S HURTING ME-AH!" She got pulled under again and again. She screamed with every ounce of herself.

"AILEEN! FATHER! HELP ME!" Red pooled around her as she screamed.

Her father pulled out his amulet once more and breathed onto it. It glowed yellow, a healing spell. Not out of pity or love; you see, this father wanted his daughter to be in pain for as long as possible before dying. He looked her square in the eyes.

"You will no longer be a burden to this family anymore."

He tossed the amulet in the water.

Her father's back was the last thing that she remembered seeing before she lost precious consciousness.

Chapter 2 by New Blue Clue



"I won!", Aileen triumphantly declared.

She turned around, expecting to find Aviary on her toes. Instead, she saw the empty path. Aileen immediately began to worry. Aviary was a fast runner, she should have been right behind her.

"Aviary? Aviary?! Where are you?", she screamed.

She raced around the corner to see her parents casually strolling and talking.

"AVIARY! AVIARY!" she yelled louder. "Mother! Father!"

Her parents jogged toward her with their arms outstretched. "What is it, dear? What's wrong?"

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"Aviary, I can't find her! Where is she?", Aileen said in a rush.

"Oh, she must have run off, dear. I heard her talking about it in her sleep.", she comforted Aileen.

"She would never do that to me! She only wanted to run off because you guys are so awful to her!", Aileen responded with venom, vowing to defend her sister.

Aileen raced over to the water scanning the surface. She failed to notice the last bit of orange fading into the water's dark depths. Seeing no signs of life, Aileen slowly walked back to her parents. She began to bawl, with body shaking with heart wrenching sobs. She began to cry even harder when she caught the end of her parents conversation.

"I never. To hear a five year old talk that way.", finished her mother, with a side-long glance at Aileen.

"I am so sorry, mother! I just want Aviary to come back! How could she do this to me?", Aileen asked.

"Sometimes, sweetum, people do things that are just mean.", her father responded, "Aviary was always jealous of you; our more talented, obedient daughter-"

"Yes, yes. That is why she has left.", her mother cut in, "I heard her say so in her sleep. Such nasty things she says about you."

Aileen believed her parents, as any five year old would, and grew to hate her over the years. By the time she was seven, Aileen was happy Aviary had left and hoped she had died. Little did she know, Aviary was alive and well, but much different the she remembered her.

The shark felt so bad that he was forced to attack the little girl, that her brought her to a nearby cave along with the healing medallion, where he could take care of her. The shark vowed never to go near the island with purple hands again and he vowed to always protect her.

Not knowing that her name was Piccolo (little one in Italian) and called himself Pescecani. Piccolo was helped with the help of his whale friend, Gobba.

They often found Piccolo (little one) but she didn't remember her entire childhood, but because she often complained of being lonely and missing

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something.

Raising a human child was a challenge for Gobba and Pescecané, not just because she was a land creature and they were water creatures, but because she ate different food than them and took a much longer time to heal. The fish they caught couldn't be eaten right away by Piccolo (she would throw up), it had to be cooked in the sun. Piccolo couldn't drink the ocean water, she had to drink the rain water that dripped into the crevices of the cave. Fortunately, it rained almost every other day.

Within a year, Piccolo had been completely healed and was an amazing swimmer, who could keep up with both Gobba and Pescecané in the ocean. Throughout the next years of her life, she learned everything there was to know about the ocean from Gobba and Pescecané. By the time she was seven, she could have lived without the help of Gobba or Pescecané, and she had no memory of humans. Little did she know, her paths would soon cross with them and some of her memory would be returned to her.

Write a draft for chapter 3 of 8

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